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The scarcity of lipidic foods, and, among the Boni, the low consumption of fruit might cause one to fear vitamin deficiencies.

In fact, there are no signs of it.

Body hygiene is excellent; Blacks and Indians bathe several times a day and are very fastidious about their persons.

In summary, there is no appreciable difference in the customary activities, agriculture, hunting, and fishing, of the two populations. There is one in economic activity. Among the Boni, who have a greater need for imported objects, the adult men work for wages four to five months per year on the average. These jobs are very laborious and performed under bad dietary conditions, whereas the Indians rest when they are not occupied with their customary tasks, sometimes spending entire days stretched out in the hammock.

The two populations have been in close contact for a long time. The Indian villages farthest downstream have immediate contact with the first crop plantings of the Boni. Without having any tendency to merge (their characters and their customs are too different), Boni and Oayana have maintained regular relations since the end of the eighteenth century, doing a little trade in imported articles exchanged for hammocks and dogs trained for hunting. They often visit each other, and nothing stops the spread of illness from the one group to the other.

In fact, the way of life of the two groups is the same, the environmental conditions have the same influence, and the differences which are observed in the pathology can only be attributed to a different sensitivity with regard to the principal illnesses.

Pathology of the Boni. We shall briefly summarize here the observations of Dr. A. Sausse in his work Populations primitives du Maroni.

The pathology of the Boni is characterized by:

-- a resistance to malaria, which means that if the children have had attacks an immunity will develop with age; the size of the spleen diminishes regularly from child to adult. The adults have only episodic attacks which are not serious; in particular

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14 In the whole of the Amazonian forest these facts have been
16 observed since the seventeenth century and have led to the re-
182 placement of Indians by slave manpower imported from Africa.
114 The course taken in denying the biological realities and wishing
to find at any cost a purely sociological explanation has inspired
in recent years an ingenious explanation by several authors:

The success of African manpower was, according to them,
due to the fact that the Blacks had a civilization closer to that
of the Europeans, whereas the Amerindians were more hunters-
fishermen than agriculturalists.

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R [105] For any observer of good faith, the Indians of Guiana and
the Blacks of the forests of the Congo and Gabon are largely
[433] on the same technological and cultural level. The Indians are
[361] certainly cultivators just as experienced as the Negroes: is one
to forget that it was they who taught the rest of the world the
greater part of the important tropical crops: manioc, maize,
cotton, tobacco, and so many others? Hunting and fishing for
them is only a secondary means of support; it is their instability,
their lack of attachment to the soil, which may create an
R [136] illusion on this point. It can be explained to a certain extent
[361] by the small size of the kinship groups: an ecological factor
which does not exist in Black Africa must also be taken into ac-
count, the manioc ant, which swarms in particular in the zones
habitually cultivated, promoting a seminomadism (18).

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[136] 18. This factor plays only a secondary role,
[361] since the Refugee Blacks despite the manioc
ant, maintain villages of permanent residence,
only changing their crop plantings, but it is
certain that it promotes the dispersion of the
groups and seminomadism.

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14 These considerations do not pretend to give a complete ex-
16 planation of the social behavior of the Indians of the Amazonian
182 forest. The biological characteristics of the group are only one
of the factors of this behavior, parallel to many others, notably

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CHAPTER VI

FAMILY CUSTOM

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105 The family custom of the Refugee Blacks presents more unity than their beliefs. Contrary to the Blacks of Brazil and Haiti, among whom the influences of Dahomey and the Yoruba country have dominated, the Refugee Blacks of Guiana have borrowed the essential part of their family custom from the Agni-Ashanti culture area. One finds again especially such characteristic traits as the prohibition of inheritance of widows, customs relating to birth, isolation of the dead in cemeteries away from habitations.

But on several essential points:

- The marriage system.
- Institutions relative to death and mourning, and the central place given to them in the whole body of customary institutions.

The Refugee Blacks have separated themselves cleanly from the conceptions of their ancestors, and the conceptions they have elaborated may be in large measure considered as an original creation.

Birth

843 Beliefs. As soon as a woman is pregnant, her husband is subject to special obligations. He may not use a shovel nor drive nails. These operations which, among the Refugee Blacks, have as their primary purpose the digging of graves and the making of coffins, might be supposed to make the child die. Neither he nor his wife may cut their hair; he is subject to food interdictions, especially the maipouri (tapir).